



# Windows to Wildlife



Volume 12

Number 1

Winter 2005



A Publication of the Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee and Idaho's Nongame Program

## In This Issue . . .

*Feeder Favorites* ..... Page 1

*Bald Eagle Days* ..... Page 3

*Vision for Conservation Success*  
..... Page 4

*Thank You* ..... Page 5

*Events* ..... Page 6

The Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee is comprised of the following agencies and organizations:

U.S. Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation

Idaho Audubon Council

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Idaho Department of Commerce

Idaho Department of Transportation

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Idaho Department of Fish and Game

## Feeder Favorites—the Corvids

by Vicky Runnoe, Salmon Region Conservation Educator, Idaho Fish and Game

A black-billed magpie swoops across your yard and lands near your feeders. “Great,” you think “another one of *those!*” Common throughout the state, magpies are members of the family Corvidae. And while a few corvid species are scorned by some birdwatchers as “trash birds,” they are actually a fascinating group with some amazing adaptations.

Magpies and their kin, the crows, ravens, nutcrackers, and jays are considered to be the most intelligent of all birds. Some have excellent problem-solving abilities as exemplified by American crows living near the ocean. These crows have learned to open clams, mussels, and other bivalves by carrying them high into the air and dropping the mollusks on rocks to open them. Gray jays, magpies, and ravens have learned that a gunshot may mean food. Many is the successful hunter who discovered he was field dressing his animal under the close scrutiny of a few jays or magpies, intent on dining off the scraps. Some corvids are also excellent mimics, imitating other birds or even man-made sounds such as a car horn. But perhaps their most amazing adaptation and the one of most interest to feederwatchers is their ability to cache and retrieve food.

Caching food insures that it will be available during times of need. As such, most caching behavior occurs in the late summer and fall prior to winter. Of Idaho's eight resident corvid species, the Gray Jay, Steller's Jay, and Clark's Nutcracker are best known for their caching behavior. All three species are birds of high elevation areas, preferring conifer forests. The Gray Jay and Clark's Nutcracker nest very early, often before the winter snows are gone. At this early time of year, access to hidden food stores increases nestling survival.

Gray Jays uniquely store food by sticking food boluses onto branches. Two mandibular glands in their mouth secrete a sticky mucous which is used to “glue” food to branches. These caches are located on the underside of branches or on branches that will remain uncovered by snow. In contrast, Steller's Jays use shallow ground caches that may be as far as 3 or more miles from the food source.

Clark's Nutcrackers also bury food. They generally choose south-facing slopes that will have minimal snow cover and will be snow-free early in the spring although nutcrackers can remember food locations after they are buried under snow. Research by Northern Arizona University biologists revealed that an individual nutcracker may store as many as 33,000 seeds in more than 2,500 different caches. Using a special pouch under

Photos above: left, Stellar's Jay  
right, Pinyon Jay—M. Morache

## FEEDER FAVORITES CONTINUED

the tongue, nutcrackers can transport up to 90 seeds at one time.

Once this caching behavior was recognized, the big question became how do the birds find their food again? Various research studies have yielded some pretty amazing answers. University of Nebraska researchers found that Clark's Nutcrackers have incredible spatial memory abilities. They are able to remember landmarks as well as the geometric relationship between those landmarks. This makes their habit of marking caches with stones and sticks an important behavior, not just a quaint habit. Research with Scrub Jays also confirmed this use of spatial memory by other corvids.

Recent research from England shows that scrub jays also exhibit episodic memory, the ability to remember past events. This allows these birds to be able to remember what they cached, when they cached it, where it was cached and whether or not they were being watched by another jay when caching food. Researchers found that jays that robbed other jays were very secretive when caching their own food, indicating these birds knew their food could be stolen by another jay. These jays more frequently used barriers and distance when hiding food than jays that had not previously shown cache robbing behavior. They also re-hid food at a later time if they knew they had been watched by another jay during the initial caching.

So, what does this mean for feederwatchers? If you feed birds year-round, the food you provide will be important for corvids making caches to last through the winter. Their activity at your feeders will definitely keep you filling your feeders but will also offer you the chance to make some fascinating observations. Several of Idaho's corvids will readily take advantage of feeder offerings all winter long.

Of Idaho's eight corvid residents, the Common Raven and Clark's Nutcracker are the least likely to frequent feeders. Ravens depend upon carrion to survive the winter months and unless you put dead animals in your yard, you are unlikely to see them near feeders. With the Clark's Nutcrackers' strong preference for conifer seeds, they generally do not utilize feeders either. However, the presence of Clark's Nutcrackers at a feeder may be an indication of a large-scale failure of cone crops.

American Crows, a common bird throughout the state, tends to be an irregular feeder visitor. Like the raven, crows also utilize carrion and may be attracted to offerings of suet as well as peanuts and corn. Data gathered last year for Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch showed that 18% of Idaho participants had crows visiting their feeders.



*Clark's Nutcracker—Wayne Melquist*

of smoke and lend a soft beauty to the northern woods. Gray Jays will readily use feeders within their territories, preferring suet, peanut butter mixes, baked goods, and even raisins. They will also feed on opened sunflower seeds since their weak bills prevent them from easily cracking unopened seeds. Gray Jays are quite bold and will readily approach quite closely. Their boldness sometimes gets them in trouble as their nickname of "camp robber" attests.

Residents of the southeastern corner of Idaho may find themselves hosting Western Scrub Jays or Pinyon Jays. Both species are blue, uncrested jays and are considered uncommon in the state. When they are present, scrub jays are easily attracted to feeders, feeding on sunflower, peanuts, corn, and suet. Pinyon Jays, on the other hand, are irregular feeder visitors but may descend on a feeding station in large numbers when natural food sources disappear.

Besides our resident corvids, many Idaho feederwatchers have been treated to visits by Eastern Blue Jays this fall. These handsome crested birds are sky blue above with a gray breast, black necklace, and white tail and wing patches. Not usually found in Idaho, Blue Jays have been seen from Salmon to Garden

Valley and north to Moscow. No one is quite sure why we have been invaded by Blue Jays this year, but a major food crop failure in their normal range is a likely explanation.

Bold and raucous, the corvids can be considered the rakes of the bird world. When, with a flourish, one arrives in your yard, it's easy to understand why they are such a successful group and deserving of at least some grudging respect.



*Black-billed Magpie—IDFG*



## Bald Eagle Days 2005

by Aimee Pope, Watchable Wildlife Coordinator,  
Idaho Fish and Game

In its sixth year, Bald Eagle Days has become a spectacular annual event. Having created it in 2000, I have watched it grow into a well attended educational event that is fun for the whole family. And in January 2005, it will be better than ever with a Wildlife Film Festival, Gala and Auction, and a school day in addition to the public event.

The original concept came from an invite to the 1999 Eagle Watch in Bend, Oregon. Once I saw the crowd and what fun everyone was having, I had to create a similar event in Boise. The population of wintering bald eagles in the Treasure Valley is large enough to dedicate an event to, and many valley residents didn't even know they were out their back door. It was time to let the Treasure Valley in on the wildlife secrets.

Bald Eagle Day has been held at the Idaho Shakespeare Festival since its inception. The location couldn't be more perfect, on the edge of the Boise River at the Barber Pool, an area protected for wildlife. The Barber Pool is about 600 acres of land restricted of human activity, therefore many wildlife have called it home all year round. The Shakespeare Festival is located on the edge, where you can have an easy look in without disturbing any wildlife. Almost like looking through the glass of an aquarium.

Each year the visitation to the event has grown, from 150 guests in 2000 to more than 1200 guests in 2003. The 2004 crowd dropped slightly, probably due to the large amount of snow that day. Those that braved the snow were in for a treat of bird handlers with live birds, presentations by wildlife experts, educational materials to handle, and wildlife along the Boise River including deer, ducks, herons, hawks and bald eagles. There is so much to see, do, and learn throughout the day, I could never list them all.

The Idaho Bird Observatory now coordinates Bald Eagle Days and is creating a bigger and better event. The 2005 event runs from Wednesday January 26 to Saturday Jan 29 with different events occurring each day. Wednesday and Thursday will be the International Wildlife Film Festival showing at the Flicks Theaters. Matinee's featuring award winning children's films and two shows each evening featuring the Film Festivals top picks are sure to please crowds both young and old. Featured films include: Dune, Best of Festival; Tears of Wood, Best Independent Film; Fast Food: A Predators World, Best Children's Program; and Desert Heart, Merit Award for Animal Behavior, Editing, and Use of Music.

Friday Jan. 28 will preview Saturday's event to a few school groups. This gives educators a more intimate opportunity to pass on the knowledge and appreciation for the wildlife along the Boise River.



Education Table—Aimee Pope

## Schedule of Events

### International Wildlife Film Festival Showings

@ The Flicks Theater, 646 Fulton, Boise

Wednesday Jan 26 & Thursday Jan 27

Tickets can be purchased at the door

### School Class Day

@ Idaho Shakespeare Festival, 5657 Warm Springs, Boise

Friday Jan 28; Classes must schedule

### Bald Eagle Days Gala and Auction

@ Boise Cascade Corporate Office, 1111 W Jefferson, Boise

Friday Jan 28 in the evening

Purchase tickets in advance or during the Film Festival

### Bald Eagle Days

@ Idaho Shakespeare Festival, 5657 Warm Springs, Boise

Saturday Jan 29

from 9am– 4pm

Free for the entire family

For more information on these events or tickets, call 334-4199 or view <http://news.boisestate.edu>



Golden Eagle "Slim"—Aimee Pope

Friday Evening will be a Fundraising Gala held at Boise Cascade Corporation. The Gala will display numerous photographs, prints, sculptures, and other artwork, much of which will be available through an auction. This fundraiser will aid in the conservation and education events of the Idaho Bird Observatory in the Barber Pool.

Bald Eagle Days 2005 is going to be an exciting event filled with entertainment, adventure, education, and most of all fun. We hope you can join us at any or all of the scheduled events from January 26-29 and enjoy the wildlife along the Boise River.



### Income Tax Checkoff

Don't forget to check the Nongame Wildlife Checkoff on the Idaho Income Tax Form. This is an important funding source for the protections and management of Idaho's nongame wildlife. Please support the Nongame, Endangered, and Watchable Wildlife Program.

## Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy:

### Defining a Vision for Conservation Success

By Rita Dixon, Zoology Program Leader and Idaho CWCS Coordinator, Idaho Conservation Data Center

Idaho is an ecologically diverse state with over one thousand known wildlife species. Of these, about one quarter are recognized to have high conservation needs because they are rare, declining, have special requirements, or face specific threats. Increasing demands on natural resources and habitat loss continue to impose challenges to the conservation of these species. These declines will continue into the future until we come together to change the way we think about our wildlife.

In the fall of 2001, Congress created the State Wildlife Grants program (SWG) to protect and manage wildlife species of greatest conservation need. This program provides federal dollars to every U.S. state to support cost-effective conservation designed to prevent wildlife and their habitats from becoming endangered. It is the first-ever federally funded, state-implemented program to proactively address species endangerment and habitat conservation.

In order to make the best use of the State Wildlife Grants program, Congress charged each state and territory to develop a statewide Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) by October 2005. These strategies will provide an essential foundation for the future of wildlife conservation and a stimulus to engage the states, federal agencies, and other conservation partners to strategically think about their roles in prioritizing conservation efforts in each state and territory.

The purpose of this strategy is to create a vision for wildlife conservation in Idaho and will provide an alternative to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) process. It is not intended to be prescriptive, but in contrast, will provide information and data to assist with local community-based conservation, including information on distribution, abundance, habitat, threats, priority research, recommended conservation actions, and monitoring plans for selected habitats and wildlife species.

Primary responsibility for wildlife management has always rested with the states. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game is leading the development of Idaho's CWCS by engaging an array of partners including governmental agencies, conservation groups, private landowners, Indian tribes, and the public.

The Strategy will use existing information as well as document research and information needs regarding Idaho's species of greatest conservation need. All told, the analysis will take nearly two years and will include the following:

- ★ Develop a preliminary list of species of greatest conservation need using conservation criteria, existing federally-listed, USFS, and BLM sensitive species, and expert opinion.
- ★ Distribution and abundance of wildlife species.
- ★ Describe locations and condition of key habitats and communities essential to the conservation of identified species.
- ★ Identify problems, threats, and opportunities that face these species.
- ★ Describe conservation actions proposed to conserve the identified species and habitats.
- ★ Establish a system to monitor the status of these species and their habitats to assess the effectiveness of the actions proposed,

and to adapt these conservation actions to respond to new information or changing conditions.

- ★ Plans for coordinating the development, implementation, review and revision of the Strategy.
- ★ Use a coarse and fine filter assessment. The coarse scale will clarify vital habitats and habitat zones, while at a fine scale will identify species with specific needs and species that are impacted by threats other than habitat loss.

Work on Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy has been actively underway since November 2003. A dedicated team of individuals has worked diligently to create an approach that will ensure the best input into the Strategy's design and development. Our project structure is designed to bring people together with a wide range of knowledge, skills, and expertise that can contribute to the Strategy's development. We have engaged a group of decision-makers from the following agencies and organizations to ensure that Idaho's strategy represents diverse perspectives: The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Conservation League, Office of Species Conservation, Idaho Council on Industry and the Environment, Intermountain Forest Association, University of Idaho's Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Idaho State Legislature, Intermountain Timber Association, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Soulen Livestock, and Idaho Department of Agriculture.

The end result will be a strategy that will guide effective conservation actions towards species in greatest need of conservation. The Strategy will be implemented through a strong partnership of Idaho's conservation organizations, agencies, tribes, county governments, private landowners, and others to sustain all of Idaho's wildlife. For more information on Idaho's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, go to the Idaho Conservation Data Center web site (<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/tech/CDC/>).



Pygmy Rabbit—  
Rita Dixon

Great Basin Collared  
Lizard—IDFG



# THANK YOU

## Thank You to All Contributors

Our sincere thanks go to all supporters of the Nongame Program, financially or otherwise. Without your contributions, the Nongame Program could not conduct critical research, hold wildlife viewing events, or publish this newsletter. The following people made direct donations, purchased or renewed a wildlife license plate, or let us know of their tax checkoff donation. These lists represent only newsletter subscribers who have returned a subscription form between September 1–November 30, 2004, and marked the contributor box. Many subscribers not listed here have contributed generously and Idaho's nongame wildlife thanks all of you.

### Plate Purchase

*Bill Angle*

*William & Carloe Armfield*

*Jacques Barker*

*Tony Bertsch*

*Dean & Alice Boyle*

*Betsy Brunner*

*Tessa Burkhalter*

*Mary Burton*

*Tim Christensen*

*Mary Kelly McColl*

*Hugh Cole*

*Bob Dougherty*

*Jeff Dugger*

*Robert & Virginia Feiler*

*Enid Frank*

*Andrew Gilbert*

*Richard Grigg*

*Julie Hall*

*Ron & Mary Hughes*

*Stacie Humpherys*

*Stephen Karner*

*Tom Kovalicky*

*Kathleen Jennings-Mills*

*George Lake*

*Linda Landers-Kessel*

*Dale Mapes*

*Michael & Suzanne Massett*

*Bob McKnight*

*Shane Moline*

*Dale and Jan Nordstrom Sr.*

*Donna Pendlebury*

*Barry & Nancy Phillips*

*L McKay Rich*

*Roy & Kathy Russell*

*Donna Shanaman*

*Allan Taylor*

*Frank Urias Sr.*

*Lois Vawter*

*Randy Wiyninger*

*Robert & Virginia Feiler*

*Fumiko Tanaka*

**\$30-50**

*Dick Wandrocke*

### Tax Checkoff

*Dean & Alice Boyle*

*Julie Hall*

### Donations

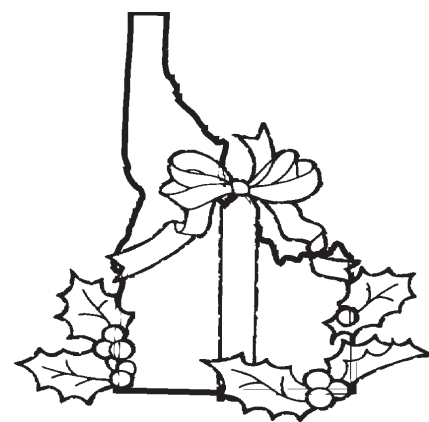
**\$5-25**

*Gene & Kay Caldwell*

*Hugh Cole*

*John & Joan Cooper*

*Dale and Jan Nordstrom Sr.*



## When Do I Renew My Subscription?

To maintain current addresses, please renew your subscription once a year. This will let us know you still are interested in the newsletter and if you were able to contribute to the program in some way.

E-mailing the newsletter has helped keep our printing and mailing costs down, but we would like more to subscribe by e-mail. For your **PRIVACY**, we will not release any of your information (address or e-mail) to anyone. The information is only used for the mailing of this newsletter. Thank you for your interest in Idaho's wildlife and for supporting the Nongame Program.

## Renew Your Newsletter Subscription . . .

To update your subscription, fill out this form and send to:

**Windows to Wildlife**

Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game

P. O. Box 25, Boise, ID 83707-0025



☐ Please add me to mailing list

☐ renew my subscription

☐ \$\_\_\_\_\_ Donation enclosed. Make check payable to "Windows to Wildlife"

☐ Trout plate purchase or renewal,

☐ Elk plate purchase or renewal,

☐ Bluebird plate purchase or renewal,

☐ Nongame tax checkoff donation (state income tax),

☐ Other nongame donation \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Send my newsletter by e-mail. (address) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please list my name as a contributor in the next newsletter (You won't be listed in the next newsletter if you don't check this box.)

☐ Remove my name from mailing list. ☐ Change my address.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_





## Winchester State Park Activities

For more information and to register, please call the Winchester Lake State Park office at 208-924-7563.

### ***Feb 5, 9:00am - 12:00pm: Winter Wildlife Tracking Beginners Workshop***

Become acquainted with the tools of tracking and how to identify the region's winter wildlife by their footprints and other signs. Pre-registration is required.

### ***Feb 19 & April 2, 10:00am - 12:00pm: Nature Walk***

Head out on our walk learning to identify the region's trees, see a few mammals or their tracks, and enjoy a little birdwatching. Pre-registration is requested.

### ***March 12, 10:00am - 12:00pm: Wood Duck Box Workshop***

Learn about Wood Ducks and the importance of offering shelter during the breeding season. Workshop fee is \$6.50 per wood duck box. Pre-registration is required.

## MK Nature Center Events

Location: 600 S Walnut, Boise, 334-2225

### ***Jan 22, 9am-noon - Ways to Save on Your Electric Bill***

Learn how to make your home comfortable, efficient and reduce your energy bills. Free Admission

### ***Feb 6, 1pm, Backyard Birds, Feeders, Seeds and More***

See how to attract a variety of birds. \$3 Donation

### ***March 12, 1pm & 3pm, Fascinating Fishes Idaho Style***

Get an introduction to Idaho's native fish species, even freshwater cod. Free Admission



## Pocatello Exhibit

### **Visions of Wildlife:**

### **Through the Eyes of Richard Jeppson**

Dates: Exhibit open through late March

Location: Idaho Museum of Natural History

South 5th Ave and Dillon St, Pocatello (on Idaho State University Campus)

More information: 208/282-3317 or <http://imnh.idu.edu>

This amazing exhibit features the work of Richard Jeppson, recently retired high school science teacher of nearly 30 years. Richard devoted his life to the study, preservation, and interpretation of the natural history of Idaho. The exhibit incorporates his beautiful wildlife photography along with the many mounts he has created through taxidermy. The natural scenes depicted will take your breath away. Please contact the Museum for hours and admission price.



*Frank Spaeth, IMNH*

The Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee and Nongame Program grant permission to reprint uncopyrighted text, **not** artwork, provided **Windows to Wildlife** is credited.

### ***Windows to Wildlife***

is a quarterly publication of  
the Idaho Watchable  
Wildlife Committee and  
Nongame Program.

Aimee Pope

Editor

Alyssa Jones

Designer

To submit an article,

obtain a subscription,  
renew a subscription,  
or notify us of address

change, contact the Editor  
at the above address.

apope@idfg.state.id.us

208/334-2920

**Forwarding Service Requested**

*Windows to Wildlife*  
NONGAME PROGRAM  
PO BOX 25  
BOISE ID 83707-0025

PRSRRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Boise, Idaho 83707  
Permit No. 408